LI Webinar: Introduction to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, unanswered questions answered

Tuesday 21 May 2024

	Questions
1	How many different habitat types are there in the metric?
Answer	There are 132 area-based habitats present in the metric. There are also a number of linear based habitats to be used in the hedgerow and watercourse modules
2	Those habitat types include everything found across England - including intertidal habitats, upland areas so for the majority of projects won't need half of these - but will depend on your project site.
Answer	Yes, only habitats identified as being present on the site, or those that will be created or enhanced need to be used in the biodiversity metric, although there is a full suite of habitat types to cater for the whole country.
4	Who assigns the size of tree against species? Is this information published for all to use consistently?
Answer	The statutory metric user guide available at link below sets out the size classes for individual trees on page 53. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides
5	Is there any further information or guidance (or someone who could be consulted) to inform the implementation of Rule 4 to support both the applicant and the local planning authority?
Answer	The Statutory User guide, available at the following link, provides further details on when to use Rule 4 and how to evidence its use on pages 16 and 17. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides
6	I may have missed the reason why but why did the 'non-priority habitat pond' get inputted into the 'Area Habitat' and not into the 'Watercourse'
Answer	Ponds are classified as an area habitat within the statutory metric and are measured in hectares. The Watercourse tab is for watercourses measured linearly such as culverts, ditches, canals and rivers, and these are measured in kilometres.

7	What would happen if only part of the hard standing in your example was replaced?, would you separate the parcels into the area to be replaced and the area to be retained in the baseline assessment?
Answer	The hard standing could be mapped as one parcel, and marked as partially 'retained' and 'lost' to account for the different treatments, or it could be mapped as two separate parcels due to being treated differently at post-intervention. This is down to the professional judgement of the competent person.
8	When considering trees, if planted within a habitat area does there need to be any amendment to the habitat area it sits within. ie. not count the area of planting which extends below the tree canopy/over the RPA?
Answer	The presence of 'individual trees' on top of an area habitat at baseline or post-intervention does not affect the area of habitat beneath them. The full value given by the 'tree helper' in the biodiversity metric tool should be used, as well as the full area of the habitat beneath as the metric tool treats them separately.
9	If through the course of your metric assessment in one LPA, you identified off-site compensatory Units in another LPA - would you then have to submit a metric assessment to the other LPA for this compensatory site - and who makes the overall decision - or is this partnership between the two LPAs?
Answer	This is a policy question so I can't answer this.
10	For large trees, what about the loss of biodiversity from the site it was lifted? Is that included in the metric?
Answer	The biodiversity metric calculation is relative to the specific site it is used for, so if a habitat is lost from a particular site (even if it is a tree that will be moved off-site), that site has lost biodiversity value, therefore it needs to be recorded as 'lost' on-site.
11	Surely a tree is greater than "Small" if it is nearly 30 years old? - And it should depend on the species being taken into account?
Answer	In the biodiversity metric, the size class of trees is based on the tree trunk's Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), which is Small (>7.5cm-30cm), Medium (>30cm-60cm), Large (>60cm-90cm) and Very large (>90cm). To avoid overestimating the size of trees after 30 years (the end of the project timeframe), it was considered that most newly planted trees will still have a diameter of 30cm DBH or less. A tree's growth rate is dependent on a range of environmental influences as well as species and size at planting, so it is down to the professional judgement of the competent person to justify if a tree will be a larger size category after 30 years.